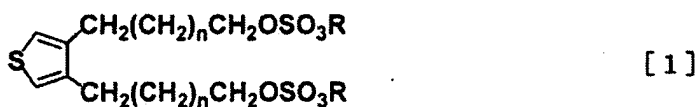


**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1. (Currently Amended) 3,4-bis(1-sulfoxyalkyl)thiophene represented by formula [1] below:



(—where R denotes a hydrogen atom, alkali metal atom, or alkaline earth metal atom, and n denotes an integer of 1 to ~~3~~ 3.)

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Original) 3,4-bis(1-sulfoxypropyl-3-yl)thiophene represented by formula [3] below:



(—where R denotes a hydrogen atom, alkali metal atom, or alkaline earth metal ~~atom~~ atom.)

4. (Cancelled)

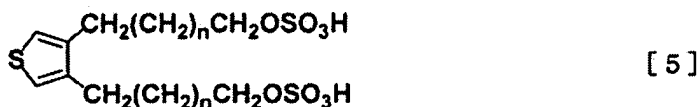
5. (Currently Amended) Sulfoxyalkylthiophene as defined in claim 1 ~~above~~ wherein the alkali metal atom is sodium or potassium.

6. (Currently Amended) A process which comprises steps of reacting 3,4-bis(1-hydroxyalkyl)thiophene represented by formula [2] below:



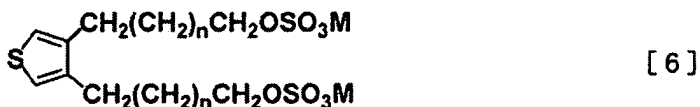
(—where n denotes an integer of 1 to 3);

with a sulfur trioxide compound to give 3,4-bis(1-sulfoxyalkyl)thiophene represented by formula [5] below:



(—where n is defined as above);

and reacting it with an alkali metal compound or alkaline earth metal compound to give a metal salt of 3,4-bis(1-sulfoxyalkyl)thiophene represented by formula [6] below:



(—where M denotes alkali metal atom or alkaline earth metal atom and n is defined as above);

7. (Cancelled)

8. (Previously Presented) The process for producing a metal salt of sulfoxyalkylthiophene as defined in claim 6, wherein the alkali metal atom is sodium or potassium.

9. (Previously Presented) The process for producing a metal salt of sulfoxyalkylthiophene as defined in claim 6, wherein the sulfur trioxide compound is sulfur trioxide, sulfur trioxide·1,4-dioxane complex, sulfur trioxide·DMF (N,N-dimethylformamide) complex, or sulfur trioxide·pyridine complex.

10. (Currently Amended) Sulfoxyalkylthiophene as defined in claim 3 ~~above~~ wherein the alkali metal atom is sodium or potassium.